



GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

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# **EDUCATIONAL REFORMS**

## **THE TRIMESTER SYSTEM IN SCHOOL EDUCATION**

**(THE KARNATAKA EXPERIMENT)**

**D. JAGANNATHA RAO**  
DIRECTOR, DSERT, BANGALORE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH & TRAINING, (D S E R T)  
BSK III STAGE, RING ROAD, BANGALORE- 560 085



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## PREFACE

Karnataka state is a pioneer in introducing several successful and innovative experiments in the field of school education. Some of the most important of these experiments are-

**Nali – Kali** (the activity based learning program),

**Chaitanya** (activity based teaching methodology),

Internship in D.Ed. Course (the pre service teacher education program),

**Bahumukhi** (the Multi grade Multi level teaching methodology),

**Keli – Kali**, the direct to class room radio broadcasts,  
The Edusat Project (Direct to classroom video broadcasts),

**Shikshanadalli Rangakale** (dramatisation of teaching techniques),

**Chinnara Angala** (the summer bridge course for out of school children),

**Mahiti Sindhu** (computer education in schools),

Prerana (foundation course for newly recruited primary teachers),

Training of teachers through teleconferencing,

Introduction of activity based text books in all classes,

Hosting of state text books on the web site, Akshara Dasoha (the hot cooked midday meal program for government and aided school children),

During 2004 – 05, Karnataka state embarked on an yet another experiment in the field of school education. The problems of the physical load of the school bag, heavy syllabus and the increasing fear of the promotional and public examinations among students have been engaging the attention of the state education department and the academicians for a long time.

In an effort to reform the present education system, the state after considerable debate among stake holders, introduced the trimester system in school education in classes from V to IX.

The trimester system has the sound psychological basis of learning in a spaced manner. It is a proven fact that learning is facilitated by spacing the material to be learnt so that better consolidation and meaningfulness prevails. Such an approach ensures long term memory and hence is preferred to massive practice of a large content at a stretch.

The Introduction of the Trimester system has been watched by the entire country with great interest. Oral testing, project work, competency based testing, giving due importance to life skills, introduction of grading in evaluation and remedial teaching of slow learners have been some of the important highlights of the trimester system.

The Policy Planning Unit has also conducted a study of the system during January – March 2005, by getting feed back from all the stake holders – the



students, teachers, head teachers, parents and education administrators. The feed back has largely been very positive.

From 2005 – 06, text books for V standard are being introduced according to the trimester system. This will lessen the physical load on the child as it will carry only two books in every trimester - one for languages and one for the core subjects. This will be extended to higher classes in a phased manner.

Based on the feed back from educationists, teachers, students, parents and the general public certain changes are being introduced in the system from 2005 – 06.

This document documents the philosophy, the process and the implementation of the Trimester System in all its entirety.

All suggestions to improve this document are welcome.

● D. Jagannatha Rao

## THE ANOMALIES IN THE ANNUAL SYSTEM

As we all know the present annual school system practiced in India, is more or less based on the pattern left by the British. For a number of years parents, teachers and educationists have pointed out various anomalies in the present education system and stressed on the need to rectify and improve the present system to make it more child friendly.

Some of the more important anomalies pointed out by educationists in the present education system are –

1. The child has to bear unnecessary physical and mental load throughout each and every academic year.
2. The present system of examination tests only the memory of the child.
3. The child has to retain all that he has learnt in one year to answer questions asked in an arbitrary manner in one - end of the year examination lasting 150 minutes.
4. More weightage is given to testing the knowledge rather than understanding, application and creative abilities of the child.



5. The present system does not recognize and give space to slow learners and children having learning disabilities.
6. The system does not give special attention to those children coming from rural areas, first generation learners, children from weaker sections of society, who fail and drop out of the school education system,
7. Due importance is not being given to non scholastic areas and co curricular activities and development of the proper personality of the child.
8. The fear of examinations and parental and peer pressure to perform better has a bearing on the emotional and mental development of the child. Several students drop out as they are unable to cope with this pressure. In rare cases, this leads to suicides also.
9. As more importance is being given to end of the year examinations, the child also neglects studies for a major part of the year. The pressure builds up as examinations approach in March every year.
10. As a result, we are having an education system producing a pass percentage averaging around 50 in X standard Public Examination and even less in PUC examination during the past 50 years.
11. The same concept is given different treatment in different subjects - which may confuse the child.
12. "Learning by doing" is not given due importance. In a majority of the cases the child has to be satisfied with black board experiments by the teachers.
13. Changes have taken place in every field over the years, which necessitates changes in the education field also.

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT

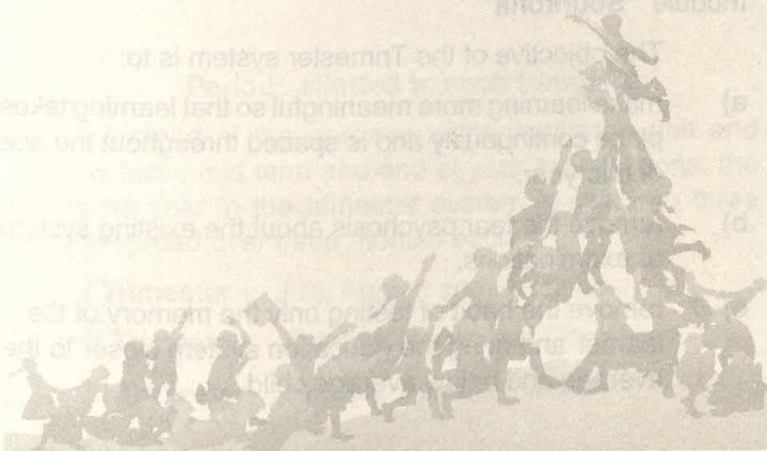
1. The seed of going in for full scale education reforms was sown in a workshop (conducted to reduce the load on the school child) held under the chairmanship of the then Education Minister Prof. B K Chandrashekar.
2. For over a year, hundreds of workshops were held at various levels throughout the state. DSERT initiated a public debate over the issue and invited suggestions and opinions from all concerned.
3. This was followed by a series of meetings and work shops which culminated in a state level workshop held in January 2003 to formulate an Action Plan for Education Reforms.
4. For almost six months during the first half of 2003, experts, educationists, class room teachers and educational administrators met every Tuesday at DSERT to crystallize the opinions and suggestions received from various quarters and then develop a system which would become an alternative to the annual system.
5. In several workshops the then Education Minister Prof. B K Chandrashekar personally participated and exchanged views with class room teachers, experts in the field and also parents and children.



6. Some of these exchange of views with the parents and the public were also made in “phone in” programs over All India Radio and TV.
7. Several major news papers invited views from readers and published their comments besides expressing their own views editorially.
8. The apparent anomalies in the annual system were discussed and solutions to each of these were explored.
9. Finally what emerged was a viable and working model which was named as **“The trimester System”**
10. It was also decided that the system was to be introduced in the entire state as pilot testing in a few schools would not necessarily be to advantage, considering the spread and diversity of the state and the 60,000 schools following the state syllabus which are to be brought under the system.
11. The Trimester system was introduced in all schools (following the state syllabus) throughout the state from the academic year 2004 – 2005.
12. DSERT brought out the guidelines for introducing the trimester system and also an exhaustive teacher training module **“Sourabha”** which was distributed to all the schools in the state.
13. First educational administrative functionaries were trained in divisional level workshops who in turn trained the head teachers and class room teachers in the cascade mode using the **“Sourabha”**.
14. Throughout the academic year interaction meetings were held with all the stake holders and educationists and opinions gathered to make the system more meaningful.
15. Several modes of communication were used to gather

stake holders' opinion on the trimester system - Phone in programs over radio and TV, the departmental monthly magazine "Shikshana Varthe", teleconferencing with all the DIETs, besides direct interaction in cluster and block meetings.

16. The teleconferencing conducted on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2005, from SIRD, Mysore and involving all the 20 DIET faculty, primary, secondary teachers and teacher educators elicited overwhelming response with more than 300 clarifications, opinions, feed back and suggestions to improve the system.
17. A study was also under taken by the **Policy Planning Unit** (a Joint collaboration with GOK and Azim Premji Foundation) to make a scientific study of the system and come out with recommendations which was also used to improve the system for 2005 – 06.







## THE FORMAT OF THE TRIMESTER SYSTEM

The trimester system was introduced from 2004 – 05 in all the 60,000 primary and secondary schools following state syllabus in the state through a Karnataka Government Order ED.24. DGO 2004 dated 16<sup>th</sup> February 2004. Based on the Government Order, DSERT after wide consultations prepared the guidelines for introducing the trimester system and later prepared a comprehensive teacher training module “**Sourabha**”

The objective of the Trimester system is to:

- a) make learning more meaningful so that learning takes place continuously and is spaced throughout the academic year.
- b) remove the fear psychosis about the existing system of examinations,
- c) remove the habit of testing only the memory of the learner and bring the education system closer to the average and below average child.

- d) Evaluate the child both in scholastic and non scholastic areas, thus giving due importance to development of allround personality of the child.

### **Focus**

**The child is evaluated only about the lessons he has learnt in that trimester so that the child does not carry the burden of memorizing what he/she has learnt through out the year.**

This does not mean that the child tends to forget what ever he has learnt in that particular trimester as learning is a continuous process and the concepts and skills the child learns is carried on in subsequent periods. Here importance is not given to mere memory but to competencies and skills that the child acquires during the process of learning.

### **Text Books:**

As a sequel, it is proposed to prepare text books having an integrated approach in tune with the trimester system. From 2005 – 06, text books based on the trimester system are introduced in V standard. It is proposed to introduce text books based on the trimester system in a phased manner in all classes from VI to IX standards over the next few years.

### **Periods allotted to each trimester:**

Instead of the one academic year as a unit and monthly tests, mid term and end of year examinations, the academic year in the trimester system is split into three periods spread over three months each.

**I Trimester -** July, August and September,

**II Trimester-** October, November, December,

**III Trimester-** January, February, March.



The most salient part of the system is giving due importance for slow learners and remedial teaching. The brighter children may be used to teach slow learners.

The teachers will also be participating in enrolment drives and other similar programs of the department in the month of June.

The month of June is largely to be utilized for recapitulation of previous concepts, remedial teaching and evaluation. For children who have not secured two C+ in the previous year, this is one more opportunity to do better, obtain a C+ in the post test and go to the next class.

This period will also be utilized by the teachers to take up bridge courses for below average children. These children are to be grouped as per their abilities and remedial teaching given using the help of brighter children. There will be a pre test which will identify learning gaps and learning distortion leading to remedial teaching and a post test. The month of June is to be also used by the teacher for academically preparing the child for the coming year.

In the trimester scheme, the syllabus was generally divided in 2003 – 04, as follows:

30% for the first trimester

30% for the second trimester,

40% for the third trimester,

However heads of institutions and classroom teachers have been given the flexibility in adapting this system in their schools. Non availability of teachers, declaration of holidays due to unforeseen circumstances has been factored in this system.

There is also provision to carry forward lessons not

taught in a particular trimester to the next trimester. The class room teachers have the option to divide the periods further and keep specific periods apart for teaching/learning, evaluation/remedial teaching. There have been remarks that the second trimester is too short because of October holidays. Flexibility has been already given to the teacher to prepare the annual work plan according to the availability of teaching periods.

In some cases, there may be disruption in teaching due to long absence of teachers (due to various reasons). In such cases schools are permitted to take the services of retired teachers with the permission of the BEO. Even otherwise the students can be taught through multi grade/ multi level teaching.

Following wide spread consultations and taking the availability of academic days in each trimester into consideration, the distribution of syllabus has been modified in 2005 – 06 as follows:

I Trimester: 35%, II Trimester 30%, III Trimester 35% The October holidays were also split to provide holidays for end of second trimester also.

In the trimester system, in primary schools the lesson plans are to be prepared by the teacher for a unit or a particular competency as per the Chaitanya model. In secondary schools lesson plans are to be prepared for each unit. The definition of a unit is left to the individual teacher as it varies from subject to subject.

The Lesson Plan will consist of the following items: - content analysis of the unit, expected learning outcomes, evaluation method to be adopted for each learning outcome, competency based unit (diagnostic) test.



## **Evaluation in the Trimester system**

In Government primary schools, the present system of continuous and comprehensive evaluation is continued up to IV standard. Progress Report Card is also designed based on competencies. Hence a separate evaluation at the end of every trimester is not deemed necessary.

For classes from V to IX standards, the new competency based evaluation is designed and introduced at the end of every trimester.

At the end of every trimester in classes V to IX, evaluation in each subject is for 90 minutes duration. It is designed to encourage learning and creativity and also test the understanding, application and other skills learnt during the trimester. At each stage the teacher has to analyse deficiencies in the learner and take up remedial teaching.

The Evaluation dates every year are also specified as follows:

**I Trimester - After 15, September,**

**II Trimester – After 15, December,**

**III Trimester – After 25, March,**

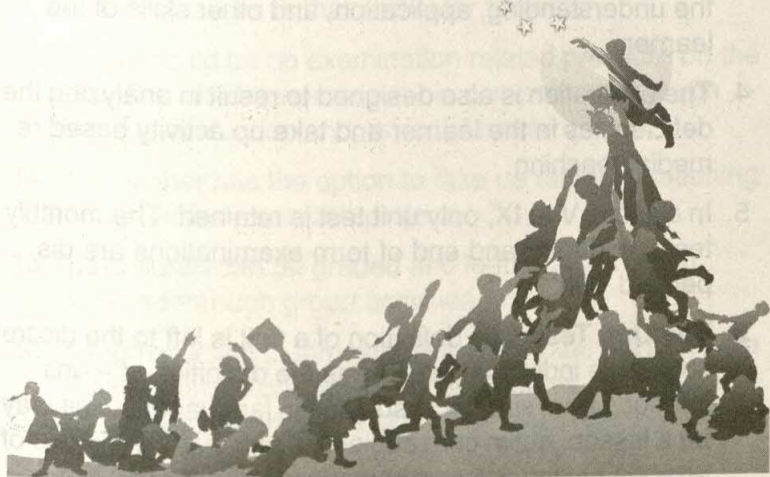
The evaluation dates (and remedial teaching held afterwards) can also be adjusted to synchronize with holidays. I Trimester evaluation can synchronize with October holidays, II Trimester evaluation can synchronize with Christmas holidays, III Trimester Evaluation can synchronize with summer holidays.

These are indicative and probable dates. They can be suitably changed to suit the school's requirements for valid reasons.

For example, the schools which are SSLC examination centres or SSLC valuation centres can have the III Trimester evaluation in VIII and IX standards immediately after the SSLC examination.

Since teaching/learning takes place at the individual class level, it is highly desirable and necessary that the evaluation also takes place at the class level only. That means the teacher who has taught a particular subject has to prepare the competency based question paper, administer and evaluate the performance of the students himself.

Hitherto the annual and mid term examination question papers were being printed by outside agencies like teachers' associations. This practice is totally discouraged.





## SALIENT FEATURES OF EVALUATION SYSTEM

1. The evaluation in the trimester system is designed to test the competency of the learner rather than mere memory.
2. In evaluation in languages, due weight age is also given to test the oral and written communication skills of the learner. The evaluation is designed to test the competencies in languages by using non textual matter like stories, dialogues, essays of similar standard. The learner has to read this material understand and answer questions on this material.
3. In core subjects due weight ages are also given to test the understanding, application, and other skills of the learner.
4. The evaluation is also designed to result in analyzing the deficiencies in the learner and take up activity based remedial teaching.
5. In classes V to IX, only unit test is retained. The monthly tests, mid term and end of term examinations are dispensed with.
6. **The Unit Test:** The definition of a unit is left to the discretion of the individual teacher as the definition of a unit changes from subject to subject. In languages a unit may be a lesson, but in core subjects a unit may be a group of lessons having a common concept or a theme.

7. Unit tests are to be used to identify learning gaps among children, analyse deficiencies in learning and follow it up through appropriate Remedial Teaching.
8. Minimal records like the note book in which the child has answered the unit test or the record maintained by the teacher for oral questioning, the list of oral questions prepared are sufficient records
9. The Unit test is basically meant to identify learning gaps in the teaching learning process. It is not perceived as a burden to either teachers or students. Hence it is not necessary to prepare blue print for preparing the question paper for the unit test. But record has to be maintained for having conducted the unit test by the teacher.
10. Here flexibility is given to the teacher to determine the size of the unit. Lesson plan has to be prepared as per this unit and learning gaps can be identified in the unit test which can be oral or written and the teacher has to plan for remedial teaching.
11. The teacher need not maintain any marks registers for the unit tests.
12. The evaluation at the end of every trimester is limited to the syllabi taught in that particular trimester.
13. There should be no examination related pressure on the child. The child can improve his competency through learning, evaluation and remedial teaching.
14. The teacher has the option to take up remedial teaching through action research projects.
15. The children can be graded and learning can be encouraged through group activities.
16. The introduction of trimester system should not also be a physical burden on the school or students. The examination papers are prepared at school level/class level by



the concerned subject teachers. The question papers may be administered either on the black board or making copies using duplicating machines. The cost may be met out of available school funds (accumulated funds, current funds, school fees, fees reimbursed from government, government grants, SDMC funds, etc.,)

17. Printing and distribution of question papers by external agencies is banned. Any school purchasing question papers from outside sources is liable for action.

18. The evaluation pattern is as follows:

### **Part A- Scholastic Areas - (For Each Subject)**

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| a) Written evaluation – | 40 Marks ( 90 minutes) |
| b) Oral evaluation -    | 10 Marks               |

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Total -	50 Marks
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### **Part B- Non Scholastic Areas**

- |                    |          |
|--------------------|----------|
| a) Project Work -  | 10 Marks |
| b) Value education | 10 Marks |
| c) Life skills     | 20 Marks |

- Physical Education

- Yoga

- Health Education

- |                       |          |
|-----------------------|----------|
| d) Art and Creativity | 10 Marks |
|-----------------------|----------|

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Total	50 Marks
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The marks obtained by the child is converted into grades as indicated in the chapter on grades.

## **Exceptions:**

English is introduced as a Second language from V standard and Hindi as a III language from VI standard for the first time. Hence written testing of the child in these classes in these languages in the I Trimester has created difficulties as experienced by the teachers. Therefore evaluation of the children in English in V standard and Hindi in VI standard I trimester has been changed to Oral test: 40 marks and written test 10 marks. However evaluation as per the prescribed pattern in these subjects also will take place from II trimester onwards. However getting two C+ in these subjects is a must for promotion.

Oral testing is not prescribed for the III trimester examination of the IX standard, as the students are given the X standard Public Examination Model format of the question paper in order to familiarize them with the X standard public examination. The annual system continues for the X standard with changes in the model of the question only.

## **Non scholastic areas:**

The non scholastic areas are introduced as compulsory subjects for the first time from 2004 – 05. In schools which have physical education teachers / music teachers/ craft teachers / drawing teachers, the responsibility of taking classes in these areas and evaluating children is their responsibility. But even in such schools, when the number of sections is more, this responsibility may be given in part to general teachers as well. In schools which do not have such teachers, general teachers are given this responsibility.

The evaluation of non scholastic areas is mainly through observation. The evaluation may be done by a designated teacher for each class or a group of teachers handling a class.



It is aimed to train all teachers in handling non scholastic areas through appropriate teacher training modules over a period of time. Hence no teacher should feel that it is not his responsibility to handle non scholastic areas as these are as important as scholastic areas in the development of the total personality of the child.

19. Following are the suggested weightages given to the objectives

- a) Languages – Knowledge 25%, Understanding 40%, Expression 30%, Appreciation 5%,
- b) Core Subjects – Knowledge 25%, Understanding 45%, Application 20%, Skills 10 %,

20. Weightages to the types of questions – objective 30%, short answer 50%, long answer 20%

21. Difficulty level of the questions- Easy 30%, Average 40%, Difficult 30%

22. The present marking system in evaluation is replaced by the grading system.

### **Teacher training and Guidance**

The responsibility of training teachers and giving appropriate guidance to teachers in the trimester system (or for that matter all departmental programs) is the responsibility of the BEO/BRC. These two officials should use all resources at their disposal to give guidance through CRC and educational coordinators at the cluster level.

Every year they should hold continuous meetings to cover all the teachers in the block and appraise them of changes made in any program for that year. They should also use the structure of teachers' associations as well.

## Issues regarding practicing schools attached to teacher training institutions:

Both in secondary and elementary teacher training institutions the practice teaching taking place in attached schools do not follow a set pattern due to the mismatch of academic calendars of teacher training institutions and attached schools. Number of student teachers attached to any particular school should be based on the student strength and number of classes in the practicing school. This number should not in any case exceed 8 – 10 student teachers per practicing school. Practice teaching should take place under effective supervision only. Lessons given to a student teacher should invariably be a lesson allotted to that particular trimester only.





## GRADING

To day, Grading system is a very popular mode of evaluating students' performance throughout the world. Australia uses a 7 point scale, Britain uses a 6 point scale, USA uses a 5 point scale. NCERT has proposed a 9 point grading method. It proposes grades for failed students also. DSERT studied all these systems before introducing grading in the state.

In standards I to IV, continuous and comprehensive evaluation is being followed in government elementary schools. This system is continued and hence grading the children in these classes is not required.

In classes V to IX , grading has been introduced as a part of reformation of the evaluation system. It is possible that the teachers find it difficult in the beginning to graded competencies development from the usual content coverage method. Hence it is planned to train all teachers over a period to make a smooth switch over to the grading method.

The following was the grading pattern followed in 2004 – 05 in Karnataka.

- :      A Grade – 75% - 100%  
           B +Grade - 60% - 74%  
           B Grade - 50% - 59%  
           C+ Grade - 30% - 49%  
           C Grade - Below 29%

Many students and teachers have expressed the view that the spirit of competitiveness should be there even among students securing grade A. Hence it has been decided to introduce one more grade as follows from 2005 – 06. The progress report is modified accordingly.

**\* Grade values**

1. A+ 90% and above	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>(6)</b>
2. A 75 % – 89 %	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>(5)</b>
3. B+ 60 % – 74 %	<b>Good</b>	<b>(4)</b>
4. B 50 % – 59 %	<b>Above average</b>	<b>(3)</b>
5 C+ 30 % – 49 %	<b>Average</b>	<b>(2)</b>
6. C Less than 29%	<b>Below average</b>	<b>(1)</b>

However the progress report is designed to mention only the grades obtained by a student in the trimester evaluation and not compare his performance with that of his peers. Several teachers without understanding the philosophy of the system favoured giving both marks and grades in the progress report cards. This is not advisable as grading is a better system than the marking system.

In certain districts, schools are obtaining approval of BEO before declaration of results. This practice of obtaining BEO's approval for declaration of result stands abolished from 2004 – 05. The schools are advised to call the SDMC meeting and appraise the members of the SDMC about the performance of the children and then officially announce the



results and also issue progress reports to children on April, 10<sup>th</sup> every year.

Social welfare, women and child welfare, SC/ST and other departments giving incentives to school children are advised to modify their norms to identify beneficiaries according to grading system and to fix minimum grades (rather than marks) for making students eligible for award of incentives. Even when they have to select a few students out of a large number of children, they are advised to have their own testing mechanism like oral interview or a written test, etc.,

### Calculation of Grade Point Average

The Grade values as given above provide an easy method of calculating Grade Point Average to determine the position of a particular student in comparison to other students. But it should not be used to rank the students in a class or for any other academic requirements. The example given below can be used only to evaluate his performance in other situations, (only when necessary) – admission to a hostel, award of scholarship, award of any other incentive when a few students have to be chosen out of a large number of students, etc.,

For comparison of overall performance of two students in a particular situation the following method is suggested:

Subjects	Student 'X'	Student 'Y'
Lang. 1	A+	C+
Lang. 2	C+	B
Lang. 3	B	A
Science	B+	B+
S.S.	C+	C+
Maths	B	C+
GPA*	3.33	3.00

\* GPA = Grade Point Average calculated on the basis of grade values indicated earlier- A+: 6, A: 5, B+: 4, B: 3, C+: 2, C: 1.

- Student X GPA =  $6 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 2 + 3 = 20/6 = 3.33$

Student Y GPA =  $2 + 3 + 5 + 4 + 2 + 2 = 18/6 = 3.00$

The overall performance of Student 'X' is therefore better than Student 'Y'

Students are evaluated in non scholastic areas in Part B through activities and observation.

In Part B the students are evaluated on a 3 point scale as follows:

A Grade - 75 %– 100%    Good

B Grade – 50% - 74%    Average

C Grade – Below 49%    Below Average

### **Declaration of Results**

No detention policy is currently followed in government elementary schools up to IV standard, as the child is evaluated through continuous and comprehensive competency based evaluation. In these classes only minimum attendance is required for promotion to the next class.

In private schools in I to IV classes, the same evaluation rules of trimester may be applied till the teachers of private schools are trained in continuous and comprehensive evaluation techniques.

For other classes, the declaration of the result of the child depends on his/her performance throughout the year. The grades obtained by the child in the three trimesters is taken for promoting the child to the next class along with a minimum attendance of 75%. The child should have obtained a minimum of two C+ grades in every subject for promotion.



## Minimum Attendance

Thus the student has to obtain a minimum of 75% (165 days) of the total number of school working days (220) to be eligible for promotion. If there is short fall in attendance of any child, the head teacher has powers to condone upto 30 days on valid and medical reasons.

Out of school children and drop outs are brought back to schools throughout the year and under various departmental programs. These children are admitted to various classes only after a pre test and as per age criteria. For these children, the attendance rule should be applied only from the date from which they are admitted to school.

For example, if the child is admitted in October, the 75% attendance should be calculated from October only. In such a case, the child should obtain a C+ in the two remaining trimesters along with attendance for becoming eligible for promotion to the next class.

The same example applies to migratory children also. The 75% rule should be applied to the days they have attended (head teacher condoning 30 days).

Even here, the child should have appeared for two trimesters and obtained a minimum of C+ in both the trimesters to become eligible for promotion.

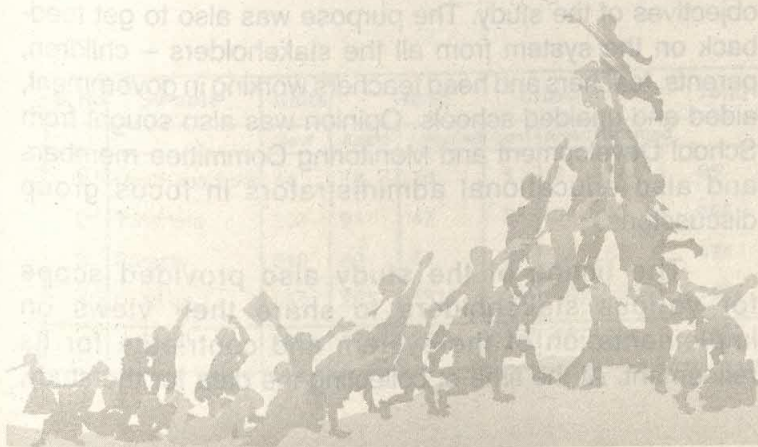
In case the child has to attend sports meets/ republic day camps/ district/state /national level competitions/ exhibitions/ medical leave etc., and thus it could not attend a trimester examination, special exemption can be given to such children but limited to only one trimester examination. If these children fail to get C+ in the remaining two trimesters, they have to be given remedial teaching, conduct a post test in June and then only declare the result on the basis of performance in the post test.

## Remedial Teaching and declaration of results

If the child fails to obtain a minimum of two C+ grades, then the child is given remedial teaching in the concepts in which he is weak and then given a post test. If his performance has improved and obtained a minimum C+ in that particular subject, he is promoted to the next class. If the child continues to get only C grade, even after remedial teaching then he is retained in the same class.

A very important feature is:

- a) Identifying children who get 'C' grades at any stage, and through appropriate remedial teaching, helping them to reach C+ and above levels.
- b) Teachers need not write notes of lessons every day but prepare Unit Plans for teaching and evaluate the teaching through Unit tests.
- c) A special emphasis is laid on "Action Research" projects which can be taken up by teachers to solve classroom related academic problems.





## THE STUDY REPORT ON THE TRIMESTER SYSTEM

In order to understand the perceptions on the strengths and limitations of the system and to enhance its implementation, the Policy Planning Unit (a Joint venture of the Azim Premji Foundation and Government of Karnataka), under took a comprehensive study of the Trimester system during the months of January, February and March 2005.

Since the system has been introduced for the first time in the state, its effectiveness as perceived by the stake holders in terms of understanding of the system and the status of implementation was one of the important objectives of the study. The purpose was also to get feed-back on the system from all the stakeholders – children, parents, teachers and head teachers working in government, aided and unaided schools. Opinion was also sought from School Development and Monitoring Committee members and also educational administrators in focus group discussions.

The timing of the study also provided scope for various stakeholders to share their views on implementation of the system and contribute for its refinement. At the time of collecting the data for the study,

the teachers both in private and government sectors had completed two trimesters and were preparing children for the third trimester. Their experiences have got value addition along with the perceptions of parents both in urban and rural areas.

The study was undertaken in 16 educational blocks spread across 8 educational districts and 4 revenue divisions of the state. The selected educational blocks were – Bangalore North, Anekal, Chitradurga, Molkalmur, Mangalore, Belthangadi, Gundulpet, Kollegal, Bidar, Basava Kalyan, Raichur, Devadurga, Bijapur, Sindhagi, Sirsi and Haliyal. In each block 3 high schools and 3 higher primary schools were selected randomly.

Out of the selected schools, 51% are government schools and remaining are private (aided and un aided) schools. Similarly in selection of teachers and other stake holders, 50% female representation was maintained.

### **Size of the sample according to rural & urban settings and the type of school:**

Sl No	Sample	Units	Rural			Urban			Total
			Govt	Aided	Unaided	Govt	Aided	Unaided	
1	Head Teachers	44	18	10		5	7	11	95
2	Teachers	203	91	47		23	39	53	456
3	Parents	216	89	52		25	36	56	474
4	Children	651	281	151		74	105	165	1427
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1114</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>260</b>		<b>127</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>2452</b>



Separate questionnaires were prepared for students, teachers, head teachers, parents, SDMC members and officers of the education department. These questionnaires were field tested and standardized before administration in the field. The primary data was collected by trained field investigators in the selected 16 blocks under the supervision of 8 members of the Policy Planning Unit.

Focus group discussions were also held in different parts of the state – Bidar, Raichur, Mangalore, Kumta, Karwar, Chitradurga, Bangalore (City) and Anekal. In these discussions, teachers, head teachers, Officers of the department, faculty members of Block Resource Centres, Cluster Resource Coordinators and faculty members of DIETs participated and gave their feed back. The secondary data was collected from opinions aired in both print, electronic media and radio/TV phone in programs and teleconferences the department conducted during the year.

### **Major Findings of the study of the Trimester System:**

1. There is an overall positive feedback on the system. Most of the different stakeholders – head teachers, teachers, students and parents are appreciative of the principles of the system including –
  - (i) Reduction in rote memorization and volume of text to be studied

- (ii) Reduced fear of examinations
  - (iii) Continuous assessment of students
  - (iv) Project work
  - (v) Emphasis on non-cognitive subjects such as dance, drama, music, yoga etc.
2. Nearly 80 percent of the teachers have opined that the system is either excellent or good and about 20 per cent of the teachers were of the opinion that the system is satisfactory.
  3. Nearly 92.6 percent of head teachers opined that the system is either excellent or good and another 7.4 per cent of them responded saying that the system is operational at satisfactory level.
  4. Slightly more than 85 per cent of teachers have reported that they have been teaching life-skills and value-based education. Classroom transactions for part-B of curriculum include extending support and guidance to children in specified areas during school working hours.
  5. Nearly 65 per cent of head teachers reported that the teachers could not conduct action research due to lack of clarity. Capacity building for the teachers to take up action research is a requirement to keep the system move forward.
  6. Selected teachers were asked about the training needs for evaluation techniques and tools, nearly 86.2 per cent of the teachers responded saying that they invariably required training.



7. When the parents were enquired about their awareness levels on the system, 87.3 of them responded that they understood the system. Among them, 53 % of the parents came to know about the system from their children. Another 21 percent from media and the remaining 26 percent have been oriented about the system by school management.
8. Slightly more than 56 percent of the parents acknowledged that the system of grading was appropriate and another 25.8 per cent of them were of the opinion that the system was inappropriate as the system clubs the highly skilled and competitively performing children also in the same grade.
9. Among the parents who are not inclined to the grading system were largely due to the belief that it has no scope for extremely better performing students who might score marks up to 95 to 98 per cent. According to them, the children who study extremely well and are capable of scoring high marks are grouped into one grade i.e. 'A' grade that considers all children who could score 75 to 100 per cent.
10. Nearly 78 % of parents said that they supported their children when children are assigned project work in the system.
11. Nearly 95 percent of children know about the system and have completed two trimesters by the time they have been interviewed. Many children were asking why the system was not extended to X standard.
12. About 95 percent of the students were given project work and could complete it successfully. Help to accomplish the project work largely came from the

- teachers (77%) another 23.4 percent of the students took help from the parents and the remaining children completed the project work either by taking help from peer groups or did it on their own.
13. Children are interested in the system and participated enthusiastically in the process to complete project work. Their interest levels could be understood through their active and lively participation in the system.
  14. 78.7 percent knew that the system has scope only to grade child performance in terms of A, B+, B, C+ and C, than providing ranks in ascending order.
  15. When asked about the usefulness of Sourabha, 55.7 percent of the teachers replied that the handout Sourabha was useful as reference material. As a result, further 21 percent of the non-trained teachers used **Sourabha** to draw insights about the system and implemented it during the academic year 2004-05.
  16. Nearly 86 percent of the teachers from rural and urban areas have conducted bridge courses in the month of June to provide specific competencies and fill the identified gaps.
  17. 99.3% of the teachers prepared the question papers for trimester at the school level and are able to flexibly include the contents for a trimester. Some teachers received question papers from the district association. It is interesting to note that no teacher from aided and unaided schools reported that they got the question paper prepared elsewhere.



**The following are the conclusions drawn from the feedback study:**

1. Sourabha, which is a booklet on the trimester system, which was published by the Government, is a self-explanatory material for the teachers and largely they could understand the spirit of the system and implement it even though some percentage of teachers is yet to be trained in the state. Sourabha is widely reported to be useful as reference material and the teachers could manage the classroom transactions in the new system, using the information in Sourabha.
2. A majority of the teachers have understood the system in its true sense and are working hard to implement it effectively without losing quality of classroom transactions. The head masters are aware of the system and are able to sensitize the SDMC members, the parents and the community at large.
3. Parents including those who are either neo literate or illiterate coming both from rural and urban areas are aware of the system and are able to help or support children in project work. It is interesting to note that the parents are pro-active with respect to the system and visit the school in the interest of their child's learning. The teachers, from government aided and unaided schools are in need of a comprehensive training on implementation of the system. A rigorous thought to design an extensive training program to teachers is perceived to be required.
4. Some more sensitization for parents and the SDMC members at the school level is a need. The system though introduced recently, could create required environment for effective implementation. Community mobilization and its sensitization for an effective involvement would enrich the dividends from the system.

5. Though there are variations among perceptions of parents from rural and urban areas, they are not wide enough to differentiate on the grounds of literacy or educational levels.
6. There is an overall positive feedback on the system. Most of the different stakeholders – head teachers, teachers, students and parents are appreciative of the principles of the system including (i) Reduction in rote memorization and volume of text to be studied (ii) Reduced fear of examinations (iii) Continuous assessment of students (iv) Project work (v) Emphasis on non-cognitive subjects such as dance, drama, music, yoga etc.
7. There are a few areas for some fresh thinking/revision.
  - a. Academically bright students and their parents fear demotivation due to single grade for achievement of 75% to 100%
  - b. Teaching the non-cognitive subjects needs to be further strengthened. Either new teachers with required skills would need to be made available or existing teacher capacities would need to be strengthened.
  - c. Maintenance of records for the trimester system by teachers needs some refining to reduce load as far as possible.
  - d. Splitting the portions of syllabi to make load on each trimester roughly equal.
8. Even those stakeholders who have reservations as above, agree that this is the first year of the system and it would take a few years for it to stabilize and for teachers and head teachers to understand its spirit fully and implement. Hence there is a widely prevalent feeling that the system is good and needs to be strengthened over the next few years.



9. The very spirit of the system through non-cognitive areas, project work needs to be more fully understood by some teachers and head teachers, so that the benefits can be fully realized.

### **Recommendations:**

1. There seems to be a need for further training to teachers and head teachers of all schools – aided, unaided and government, so that the implementation of the system can be made even more effective. The cascade mode of training on the system should be supplemented by having the master trainers monitor training at the district level.
2. Bridge course is expected to be taken up for 4 weeks totally for the whole academic year. However, it was suggested by the stakeholders in focus group discussions that the whole 4 weeks of bridge course program can well be bifurcated into 3 convenient phases. Phase one of it may last for 2 weeks at the beginning of the academic year, phase two, for a duration of one week at the beginning of the second trimester and the last phase of it for a duration of one week at the beginning of the third trimester. This would facilitate for effective bridging of learning gaps in attainment of competencies among children.
3. All the teachers and head masters acknowledge Sourabha as a self-explanatory material. However, there is a need to make it available for all schools and it would be ideal if each teacher has a copy of the book. This would invariably help for effective implementation of the system.
4. It is also recommended that Sourabha be further extended and cover the following areas:
  - a) Non cognitive domains – how to teach and how to assess and evaluate

- b) Project work – examples / illustrations
  - c) Details of bridge course, duration and methodology
  - d) Promotion rules to be explained in more detail
  - e) A need has been expressed in some quarters for ranking children or at least identifying toppers, for the purposes of scholarships, prizes etc. Some guidelines for this could be suggested in Sourabha in the context of the grading system
  - f) Sourabha training module needs to be made activity-based
5. It would be useful to appoint the BRC as the nodal officer for the system in each block so that quality concerns can be ensured.
  6. The duration of the three trimesters may need to be looked at, or the content to be covered in each trimester may need to be modified, so that the content is covered in a proportionate manner across the trimesters.
  7. There is a question amongst several stakeholders about Class X, not having the trimester system, since students would have got used to the trimester system from class I through class IX. This needs to be addressed by the department.
  8. The system requires question papers to be set at the school level. There needs to be a provision from contingency funds for printing question papers.
  9. Attendance requirement (75%) and promotion rules for children who join in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester needs to be specified. For e.g. 75% attendance should be based on number of days after the child joined and not the entire year



10. In case of out of school children who would like to join the system, on the basis of their age (for e.g. a child of 12 years can directly get into class VII), earlier, they needed to write only one exam to qualify for admission, now the promotion process needs to be clarified.

**The department studied each of these recommendations. It constituted a committee of educationists and class room teachers. The committee deliberated on these recommendations and drew up modified guidelines for the Trimester system. These are introduced from the academic year 2005 – 06.**





## X STANDARD PUBLIC EXAMINATION REFORMS

The expert group (led by Dr. T K Jayalakshmi of R V Educational Consortium, Bangalore), which was constituted to look into the examination reforms for the X standard Public Examination, concluded that conducting a public examination at the end of every trimester is not practically viable and hence suggested for introduction of competency based and objective type question papers for the public examination.

Even after X standard, both years of PUC have got annual examination formats. Moreover the child who enters X standard has sufficiently matured to take on the annual system. Hence it was felt that the annual format may be retained for the X Public Examination with some suitable modifications.



Even earlier, as a preliminary step to examination reforms, a new type of competency based question paper was field tested in 48 secondary schools in 8 districts covering 17,883 children in 2003 and again field tested in 20 districts in VIII standard annual examination of 2004 covering 51 secondary schools and 5495 children.

1. The students have shown interest in the new format of the question paper. Their performance was definitely better when compared to their performance in the old format.
2. The average performance was 40 – 80 % in Part A (objective questions) where as it was only 15 – 48% in Part B (short and long answer questions)
3. There were no significant variations either due to gender, government or private schools or rural and urban schools.
4. The new format encourages the students to understand the concepts better rather than cram the content.
5. This format (Part A) can easily be converted to OMR format which will further help in speedy declaration of results.
6. Malpractices are reduced as scope for copying comes down.

Based upon results obtained in this pilot study, the format of the examination for the X standard was finalized by this working group.

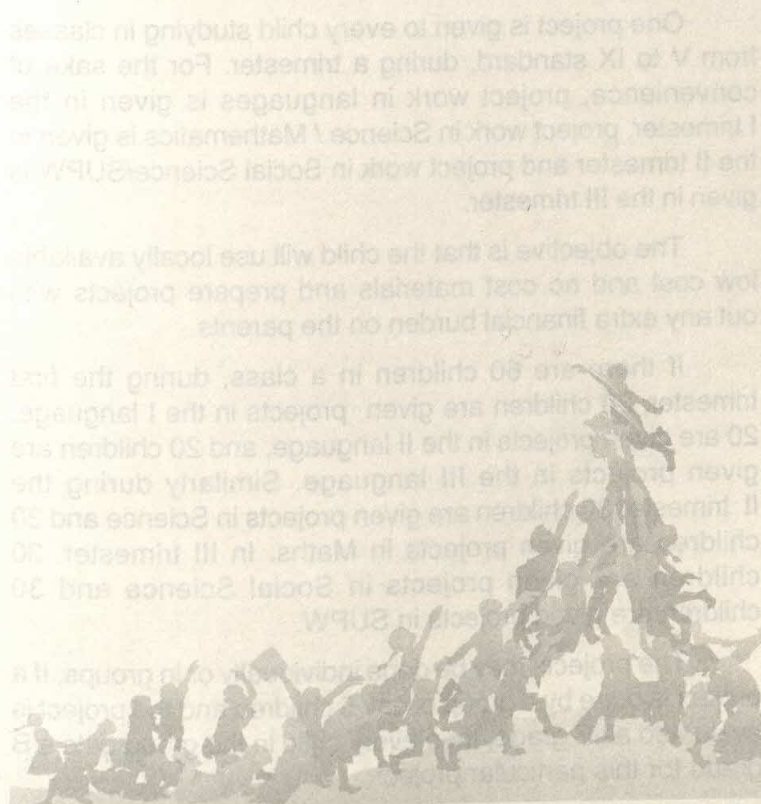
Each question paper is to contain two parts in the X standard Public Examination commencing from March 2006. The first part will consist of Objective type questions and the second part will consist of competency based questions which will test the analytical ability, problem solving, expression and other important abilities and skills of the child.

The distribution of marks between Part A and Part B in each question paper is as follows:

In languages — Part A – 50 %, Part B – 50 % of the marks,  
In core subjects — Part A – 60%, Part B - 40% of the marks,

The model of such a type of question paper was introduced for the III trimester examination for the IX standard in March 2005 to make the teachers and students familiar with the type of question papers which are going to be introduced in X standard Public Examination for March 2006.

## THE PROJECT WORK







## THE PROJECT WORK

One project is given to every child studying in classes from V to IX standard, during a trimester. For the sake of convenience, project work in languages is given in the I trimester, project work in Science / Mathematics is given in the II trimester and project work in Social Science/SUPW is given in the III trimester.

The objective is that the child will use locally available low cost and no cost materials and prepare projects with out any extra financial burden on the parents.

If there are 60 children in a class, during the first trimester, 20 children are given projects in the I language, 20 are given projects in the II language, and 20 children are given projects in the III language. Similarly during the II trimester 30 children are given projects in Science and 30 children are given projects in Maths. In III trimester, 30 children are given projects in Social Science and 30 children are given projects in SUPW.

The projects may be done individually or in groups. If a project is done by a group of say 5 children and the project is evaluated as B grade, then every child in the group gets a B grade for this particular project.

The children should be encouraged to choose projects in the respective subjects rather than the teachers imposing projects on children. After the projects are completed in every trimester, an exhibition may be conducted displaying all the projects done by the children. Here the children may be encouraged to explain their projects to other children. This may be also used to evaluate the projects.





## PRIVATE CANDIDATES

Formerly VII standard was the last year of the elementary education cycle and VII standard examination was a District level Public Examination. There was provision for the private candidates to directly sit for this examination subject to satisfying the age criteria.

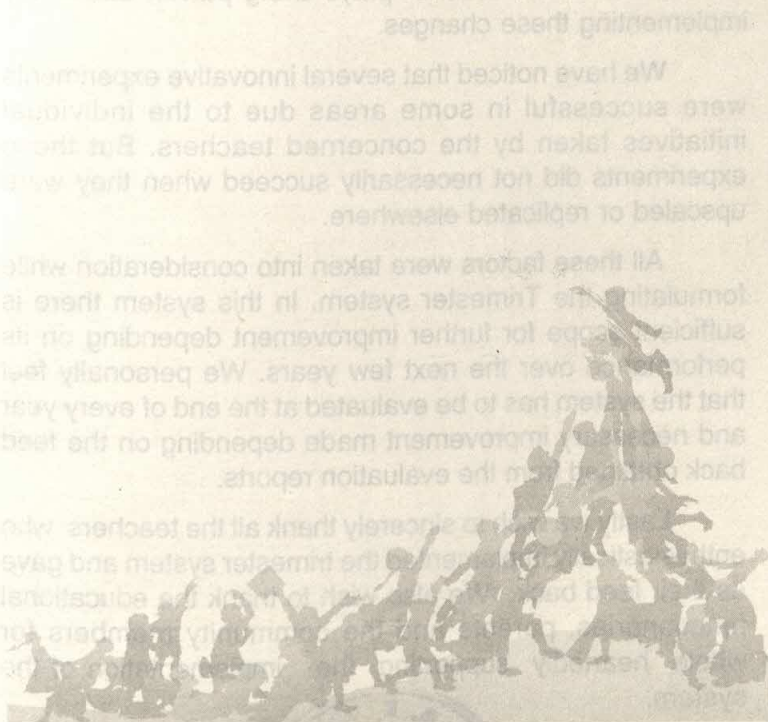
With the abolishing of the public examination for the VII standard and introduction of the trimester system, it has become necessary to provide sufficient opportunities to private candidates to enter the education system at all levels. Otherwise we will be denying opportunities for older and willing children to enter the education system.

The foremost objective of all departmental programs is to make the child attend school. In the event the child is unable to attend school due to various reasons, the child has to be registered in the nearest upper primary school as a private candidate and the child has to take all the three trimester examinations with other children. These private candidates are to be encouraged to attend school as much as possible but due to compelling reasons will not be able to attend the school regularly.

The expert group deliberated on this subject. Since there is a primary school (having classes up to V standard) with in walking distance of every child, and heavy drop outs occur only after V standard, provision for private candidates is made in classes VI, VII and VIII standards.

For admission to class VI as a private candidate, the child should have completed 12 years, for admission to VII standard the child should have completed 13 years and for admission to VIII standard the child should have completed 14 years. The private candidate takes the three trimester examinations along with regular children.

No fee of any kind is charged by the school. The promotion rules are the same. The private candidate also has to obtain two C+ in every subject for promotion to the next class. Part B is not insisted for the private candidates.





## THE LAST PAGE

One important factor that has been noticed time and again is that the teacher plays the single and most important role in making the child learn. Whatever changes we bring in the education system, ultimately it is the teacher who has to implement these changes effectively in the class room. Here the attitude of the teacher plays a big part in effectively implementing these changes.

We have noticed that several innovative experiments were successful in some areas due to the individual initiatives taken by the concerned teachers. But these experiments did not necessarily succeed when they were upscaled or replicated elsewhere.

All these factors were taken into consideration while formulating the Trimester system. In this system there is sufficient scope for further improvement depending on its performance over the next few years. We personally feel that the system has to be evaluated at the end of every year and necessary improvement made depending on the feed back obtained from the evaluation reports.

Lastly we wish to sincerely thank all the teachers who enthusiastically implemented the trimester system and gave us their feed back. We also wish to thank the educational functionaries, parents and the community members for whole heartedly supporting the implementation of the system.

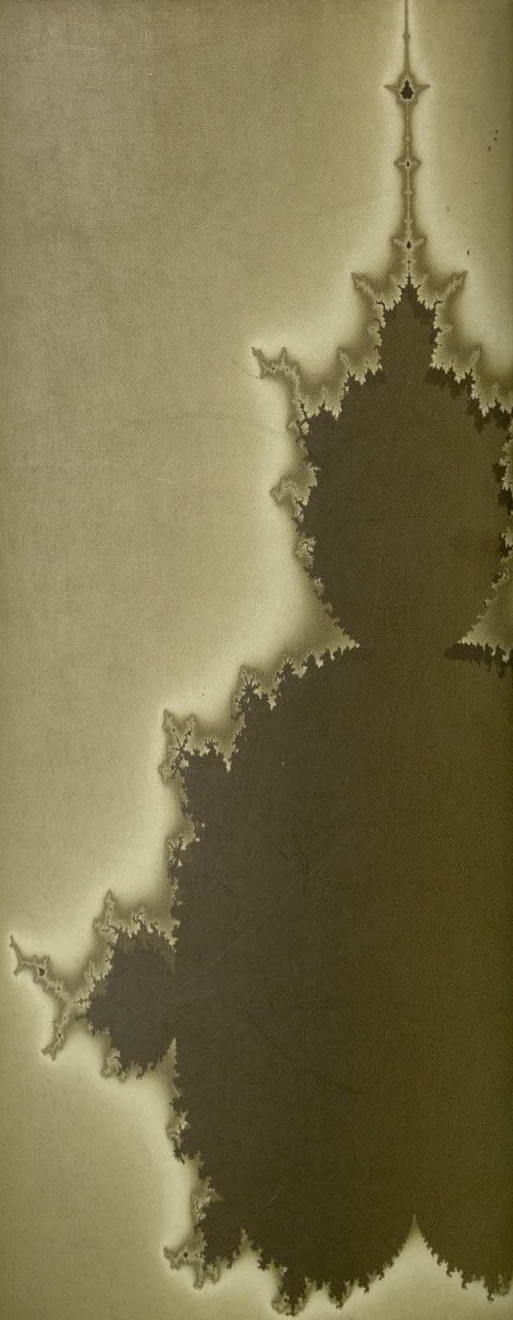




# EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

Bagur Markandeya

## THE TRIMESTER SYSTEM IN SCHOOL EDUCATION



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